# Thanatophobia

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# Thanatophobia

by Thanatophobia (PuddieBlackCat)

Summary

Thanatophobia: The fear of death and the dying process.

THIS IS A WORK OF FICTION. ANY SEMBLANCE TO ANY PERSONS LIVING OR DEAD IS ENTIRELY COINCIDENTAL.

I have yet to determine if this is a prequel to Death and Autism or if it's a director's cut. More likely the Director's cut since there was a lot of stuff that didn't quite make the cut (such as Ali working at Dutch's hotel or a heated argument over sailing with Elaine)

# Chapter 1: Prologue

The full moon was high in the sky and it was a quiet night. But it was not a normal evening. It was Halloween night, a night where ghosts traverse among the living mortals who are in disguises. One particular ghost was floating through the crowd of children in the bustling streets of Norwich.

Picture a ghost owl for a minute. What's the first thing you think of? Pale feathers? Invisible? Grace and elegance? Well, this ghost owl throws that notion in the trash and breaks all of the stereotypes by its appearance alone. The ghost in question did not look like a traditional ghost. In fact, some could easily mistake this ghost for a Disney animatronic with its cartoony appearance and looks like it operates solely on cartoon physics. It vaguely resembles a long eared owl, with large, swirling orange eyes, a cartoonishly purple outline, and midnight black feathers.

The ghost owl in question stretched his wings and legs, towering over the residents of Norwich. Its face shifted around briefly before setting its gaze on a small family of six. He stretched again, his pink waistcoat and bowtie visible. The gem on the owl's double Albert chain glowed with a harsh, unnatural light. It hooted and focused on the family. In particular one little human…

The owl squints. Under that pesky mortal body… the owl knew that there was something different about this human. Her hazel eyes refused to meet anyone's gaze as she trick or treated. Her adorable little vampire costume showed that she was a little thin and lanky for a six year old child. But the minute their eyes met, the owl's eyes widen in shock. *Am I imagining things!?* The owl wondered to itself, stretching its neck to impossible lengths to have a proper look. *It can't be Octavia! It was over 100 years since the incident happened!* The owl's mind raced.

The owl muttered to itself, "Barnaby, you're insane. You spent a hundred years on a fools errand looking for the soul of your dead daughter. It can't be in this dimension inside of a thing that looks like a featherless bird!" Its voice is described as very fruity and frankly quite flippant. Some could argue that the giant owl may be homoromantic by its mannerisms. The owl (who we know as Barnaby) silently followed the family home. He was laser focused on the hazel eyed little one. He made himself into a fine purple mist and entered the house.

It was a very small house. If Barnaby was its real size, it would not be able to fit at all, but since Barnaby can change its size at will, it would be comfy at seven feet tall. That ghost owl silently followed the "little bird" upstairs to her bedroom. Barnaby entered the room and noted that it was a pale pink color. It was a little messy but not unbearable. It entered and preened its feathers, invisible. It waited until the father came in. "Good night, Ali Mayser!" The father chirped, his blue eyes on the little bird. He kissed the human holding his daughter's soul and left.

That was when Barnaby decided to show himself. He waited until the light was turned off to show himself. First he showed his orange eyes, blinking and staring at the little human. She

screamed as it made itself fully visible, puffing its black feathers. It approached the diminutive human, its talons lightly clicking on the hardwood floor. Barnaby grinned, stretching its wings out and hugging it tightly. “ Trying to hide from your host, are we? Well, that’s not very nice! The party starts soon and you are not dressed! Hoo-hoo-hoo-hoo-hoo-hoo-hoo! I will pick out a delightful party outfit and death for you!” It scolded the little human, swinging it around.

Instead of giggling like most tiny humans, this one screamed. That caused Barnaby to drop the human and shrink back. Then it puffed itself up, pulling out a few feathers and tucking one in a drawer. Then it glared with a grin at the tiny human. “I will return! See you soon, little mortal!” It laughed before returning to its manor for the night.

Barnaby Manor was in a pocket dimension where the moon is hexagon shaped. Barnaby stepped in through a portal and finally unmasked, starting to melt with a sob. *Octavia did not recognize her own dad!* It mourned quietly, fluffing up its feathers. The owl gazed at the moon, and then let out a mourning hoot. It entered the manor, the green wallpaper still shockingly pristine despite being untouched for a hundred years. The dreaded ghost owl Barnaby brushed past its Barnaboos, and it started melting. Brilliant neon tears fell as it entered its home.

The galaxy ceiling of Barnaby’s bedroom greeted it. The glow in the dark plushies look inviting on the bed and the organ was in the corner. Barnaby approached the organ and played something very sorrowful. It sounded like “Your Reality” from Doki Doki Literature Club. Its talons glided against the ivory keys with a grace of a skilled pianist. Orange tears spilled from Barnaby’s eyes as it cried and hooted.

That night was the first night in half decade that Barnaby Wifflemaker cried itself to sleep.

# Chapter 2: The Murder

Halloween 2006. I will never be able to forget that night or the event of the week for all of the tea in China. My babysitter took me out trick or treating during the day quite unwillingly. I was six years old and excited. I slipped into my vampire costume, putting on those fake vampire fangs for children. I grin in the mirror, my missing tooth evident. Then I start bouncing in excitement as my babysitter arrived. He was a surly teenager with a few zits, but that didn't matter. As my parents left for the day, they told my babysitter, "Keep an extra good eye on Ali May. She is a little wanderer!"

"Whatever." The boy sounded pretty noncommittal as he looked at his flip phone. If only he knew that he would catch the attention of a murderous ghost owl…

I spent that afternoon walking around the neighborhood, talking my head off to the boy about Dr. Weahagu and Sonic. I think he was probably wishing for an off button on me since even though Dr. Weahagu got me talking, I just chatter and drive everyone nuts. We did not know that I was stimming back then. After getting home from a day of having adventures in the neighborhood, we got home and my family got ready to do some nighttime trick or treat. Little did we know that my troubles would begin here.

After we start walking around, I noticed a particularly fascinating animatronic that caught my eye. I've always loved cartoons, so this owl caught my eye. His black feathers, purple outline and orange eyes are enough for me to find him stimmable. His neck stretched to look at me, his orange eyes widening into a telescope to look. My mom pulled me away with a chuckle, unaware that the cute cartoon owl had a deadly streak. I stimmed in excitement until my mom slapped my fingers. "Puddie! No stimming!" She scolded. "Stimming is bad!"

I stop stimming, mumbling my apologies. I look at the giant black owl and mutter my apologies to him. He flapped his wings and hooted, his grin evident. I did not realize that this owl was autistic too. I notice the pink waistcoat and bowtie on him. I giggled at the absurdity, unaware of the nightmarish night that would happen…

Meanwhile at the Black House, Tobias was on his flip phone. He was not there for good purposes. He checked out the entire house, scoping it for anything. He does, unaware of the trouble ahead. My golden retriever mix growled at Tobias, knowing he was not up to any good.

Once we got home, our little family of six enjoyed the spoils of our trick or treating. I was animatedly talking to my siblings about that owl, thinking he was so cool. Little did I know, I would be singing a different song later. Tobias was nowhere to be seen, but our dog kept growling at the recliner Daddy loved sitting on. The Lhasa Apso we had was pacing too.

That night, Daddy tucked me into bed. I was a giggling little one as he kissed my cheek with his bushy mustache. "Good night, sweetie pie!" He sang.

"Good night, Daddy!" I sing back, my hazel eyes wide with adoration at the blue eyed man who is my father. The door closed and I snuggle my glow in the dark CareBear. I have always

been afraid of the dark. I close my eyes tight and try to drift off to sleep.

A half hour later, I hear hooting. I open my eyes and look around. It was dark in my room, and Mommy insisted that I was a big girl who didn't need a nightlight. My eyes finally landed on a pair of glowing orange eyes. Then I see a huge smile… above the eyes!? It flipped itself right, and became more visible. I gasp in adoration and shock, clutching my CareBear tight. *It was that owl robot from earlier!* I thought, squeezing tight.

I watch as the big owl flapped his wings in a fluid motion and hoot happily. Then it approached me. I cowered as its feathers brushed against my face. It felt like spiders were crawling on my face. I hid under my weighted blanket, hugging my CareBear plush tightly. The dim glow was soothing… *That was scary! How is it moving on its own!?*

That was when I heard a fruity, masculine voice call out, " Trying to hide from your host, are we? Well, that's not very nice! The party starts soon, and you are not even properly dressed! Hoo-hoo-hoo-hoo-hoo-hoo-hoo! I will pick out a delightful party outfit and death for you!" Then I felt something like bird feet wrap around me. The only reason why I knew it was a bird was because it felt like Grammy Dee's parrot… but much larger! I yelled as that owl swung me around and hugged me tightly. His inky feathers felt soft… but sticky. As if someone had blended feathers with slime.

I try to beg, but the owl shushed me. Then he looked into my eyes and gasped softly. "My pretties are going to love you! Come come, little bird! We need to bring you home!" He cackled, trying to shoo me in a portal that was black with a purple outline. I screamed bloody murder, running for my life. I think I hurt that bird's feelings, but I didn't care since I was trying to avoid dying or being taken away from my parents.

Then he heard something I didn't and left a present for me on my dresser: a single black feather from his wing. It was black, with an outline. It looked like a cartoon feather in real life. I gasp, "Please, Mister Owl! I'm just a little one!" Tears were streaming.

Then he approached, wiping my tears and blepping adorably at me. I didn't realize that he wanted to cry. He started melting a little and excused himself after tucking me in my weighted blanket.

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Meanwhile Tobias was trying to sneak in. He did not know that his life's extended warranty was going to be cut drastically short by a few minutes. He had a machete and a murderous gleam in his eye. He was planning on offing me specifically… but I didn't know that. All I knew was that some big terrifying bird tried to coax me into leaving my family.

He sharpened the machete and was about to enter when a fruity voice giggled maniacally, "That will do knife-ly!" Tobias turned around and found himself face to beak with a bird that was easily three times his size.

Tobias tried to say that he was straight, but it was too late. The knife stabbed him hard in the chest and Tobias was dead before he hit the ground. Then the bird lifted Tobias and dragged him into a black portal.

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The next morning, my parents found what looked like red paint. Mommy ran a hose on it and the red paint swirled down the sidewalk. When authorities asked about it, they just thought it was red paint. So after rinsing it off, the red paint was all gone.

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In the afterlife, Barnaby was holding a Barnaboo tightly against a wall. There was no trace of an excited host in his orange eyes. Instead, there was a murderous fury that would make a normal human quiver in horror. “How dare you try to kill my little bird!” He seethed, his Stygian feathers puffing up to make himself easily three times his size. The Barnaboo cowered as Barnaby continued his vengeful tirade. “I spent one hundred years trying to get my little Octavia home and you nearly killed her!” Barnaby threw the Barnaboo as hard as he could out of the house. “ *YOU ARE UNINVITED FROM MY PARTY FOR THE ATTEMPT TO KILL OCTAVIA, YOU PATHETIC TEENAGED BRAT!* ” The fruity voice boomed as the Barnaboo was banished.

After Barnaby took a few minutes to calm down, he wrote down a note and slipped a glow in the dark plush of himself through the portal. He chuckled and reached into a different portal to grab a treat from his selection. He nibbled on the caramel apple as he watched my reaction.

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The next weekend when Tobias was supposed to babysit me, he did not show up. My parents instead found a note addressed to me. It read in a flowing and cursive way,

*Hello, Mr. and Mrs. Black!*

*Your daughter Alison was one of the most fun kids I have ever babysit! Unfortunately, I have other kids to take care of! I can’t come in anymore because Alison takes a little bit of time away from my studies. So here’s this cute plushie I got for her! I know she loves glow in the dark things so this little guy should be perfect company!*

*Tobias.*

I was chattering to myself in my room, lost in my own fantasy when my dad entered. He held up a plush of the owl I encountered. I completely forgot about that owl. I giggled at the cartoony face and hugged it before placing it up high. Nobody knew that Tobias was dead and trapped in purgatory alone.

# Chapter 3: Childhood/Barnaby's Meltdown

Chapter Notes

See the end of the chapter for notes

That blasted owl kept showing up nightly trying to coax me into leaving my family to join his party. Each time he was unsuccessful, leaving a feather as a parting present. I didn't realize that the plush owl was basically that owl's eyes. It got so bad that I ended up talking with Dr. Weahagu about it. I had bags under my eyes from "battling" with the giant black owl. That owl always disappeared before my parents entered my room. There were already four instances where that owl tried to smother me with my CareBear. My parents thought I was being crazy and blamed it on watching my older brother play video games, which is further from the truth.

Nightly, the owl would try to manipulate me into coming to his party. He would use all sorts of Halloween themed treats to lure me in but his go to is always caramel apples. Or apples with a sickly green substance coating them. After eating one bite of an apple dipped in green, the owl finally spoke with a maniacal, fruity tone. "You're almost there, little bird! I poisoned you! Hoo hoo hoo!" He hooted, causing me to run out of my room and shake my parents awake. My parents saw me turning pale and immediately called poison control. As Daddy hefted me on his shoulder I glanced to my left to see the owl gazing at me with a stare similar to that of swallowing lemons.

I have already learned a funny gesture from Daddy when some guy cut us off at a freeway. The bird hid in the backseat and glared at me. So I observed Daddy's middle finger towards the driver who cut us off while I was feeling very sick. I turn and perform the same gesture to the owl, sick. That earned me a sharp "PUD! BAD!" from Mommy. Along with my fingers slapped. It was worth it since that night colored owl had it coming.

After spending a week in the hospital, I completely swore off accepting anything from that black owl. A few times he tried to stab or strangle me but I was quick on my feet, aiming instead to tickle him. That earned a lot of hooting laughter and for the owl to quit trying to kill me. I noticed that he is soft, slimy and cold… nothing like a living person. So I start hyperfixating on ghost stories and doing research to learn that he was a ghost owl. *That's one mystery solved. Now, who is the man behind the mask?* I mused, thinking the owl was something from Scooby Doo.

In my defense, I thought that owl was my dad pranking me. My dad is… well, my dad is a bit of a silly guy. He had pranked my brother a few times with all sorts of Halloween props, but he would never touch a spider. Instead, he would scream bloody murder at the sight of an eight legged bug…

I spent most of my time trying to defend myself from that wretched black owl with a wooden sword. The first time, he was hooting, flapping his wings and laughing really hard at me. "A wooden sword? That flimsy thing would do nothing to a ghost owl like me, little bird! I had a hundred years worth of practice with my Gem of Reality!" He cackled as he pinned me

against a wall. My little heart was beating too fast when I noticed the gem on his chest. It was sitting on a double Albert chain and he was polishing it like it was the source of his strength.

I yelp as he used one bird foot to get me close to his face. My little face was pinched with terror. I was 13 now, battling this bird tirelessly. I knew that I can't continue like this forever so I have made scarecrows around my room with stuffed animals I can get my hands on. At this point my dad was telling me that I was a little bit too old to have a monster under my bed. Those swirling orange eyes haunted my nightmares..

*I dream that this owl was chasing me. He was wearing a reaper costume… that was hot pink. When he flicked the hood down, he was holding a scythe. Then he would point at a clock and cackle, "Little bird, your time is running out! I will be seeing you again! I will watch and wait for you to drop your guard!" He stuck his tongue out with a maniacal laugh, causing me to run. The ground shook, then he burst out, nearly 140 feet tall. I scurry…*

I wake from my repeated nightmare with a start. I just started taking up swearing, panting as I grip my chest. "Come on, Ali! Snap outta it!" I scolded myself. At this point I was starting to question myself. My first cartoon crush was Rouge the Bat when I was 11, so I should have known that I wasn't straight. And no matter how hard I tried, I can never quite seem to fit in. I try my hardest to find something that was in, but nothing worked. I got ridiculed a lot and targeted for bullying because my bully saw me as "getting the special treatment" just because I was autistic. I never knew that the owl was watching me from afar…

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Back at Barnaby Manor, Barnaby Wifflemaker was watching me through her Gem of Reality. Her orange eyes were laser focused on my universe. She was muttering feverishly, "That little bird is growing! They don't know that they're gender fluid! Hoo hoo hoo hoo!" She stroked one of his own ear feathers with a bird foot, watching and waiting for me to screw up. She glanced at a clock and gasped. "Almost party time!" She exclaimed, scurrying to her perch. She found herself gazing at her party.

The atmosphere was quite intoxicating. Barnaby took a deep inhale and sighed. *The scent of the party is quite intoxicating! Dying is the fun part! Why do mortals fear this? It's like taking a load off! Why do they stress so much?* Barnaby mused to herself as she made her rounds. She circled her guests with the grace and intimidation of a predator. When someone is feeling down, she used her gem's magic to perform the most hilarious visual gags.

Barnaby sighed happily. She can practically taste the excitement of the Barnaboos as they partied. The dance floor was orange and black as different Barnaboos danced. She quivered in ecstasy as the party fed the gem and by default herself, making her stronger. Barnaby hooted, straightening out her bowtie as she briefly preened her feathers. They shone with a Stygian darkness, the purple outline adding a menacing glow. She murmured, "Yes, my pretties… enjoy the party. Have fun."

The Barnaboos are very loyal to her, often inviting her to join in on the games. She felt a bitterness as she thought about her living days, where nobody wanted to play with her as an owlet. Barnaby briefly scowled, her beak curling in disgust at the thought. Then she shook her head, her long and luxurious ear feathers fluffing up. *Do not think about what happened*

*100 years ago! You can't have a meltdown in front of the Barnaboos! They need you to be a good host!* She told herself. She noticed that she was starting to melt. *Oh darn.* She thought as she excused herself.

Once she was safe, she allowed herself to melt, sobbing and hooting. Her feathers took on a liquid form, becoming a disgusting inky texture. Her pink waistcoat and bowtie dripped and melted everywhere in a disgusting pink slime. Her neck took on the appearance of melted candle wax. She sobbed silently to herself, her tears becoming thick and viscous, like orange sorbet. The worst part was that this meltdown was particularly uncomfortable. She sobbed softly, *Wish Octavia was here instead of that pesky mortal bird with no feathers!*

After she was done melting, she started straightening herself out. She preened her feathers back into pristine condition, straightened her waistcoat out and fluffed her bowtie. She briefly applied orange makeup around her eyes to hide the fact that she was crying and melting earlier. She often felt vain and insecure every time she melted. Her Barnaboos don't mind and would comfort her, but to Barnaby, it was still mildly embarrassing when her pretties see her in such a state of undone.

Chapter End Notes

Well, here's another chapter. And yes, Barnaby had a meltdown there.

# Chapter 4: 10 Years Later

It's been literally ten years since I had last seen that death loving owl. I'm almost eighteen and my mental health was shaky at best. I recently lost my dad and things were not looking great for me. I was struggling in Statistics and I was dealing with the normal high school bullshit on top of that. I gave up on sleep and I gave up on giving a fuck about what I say. I have also given up on my appearance, often coming to school with messy hair or lack of deoderant.

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Barnaby was partying and hosting as usual. Their swirling orange eyes lit up with excitement when a new Barnaboo arrived to the party. He looked lost and confused to Barnaby. *Probably because he was expecting heaven or hell, not me.* They guessed. Their orange eyes gleam as they approach. Barnaby approached from behind, slicking their feathers back with a wing. "Hello! Welcome to the party!" Barnaby greeted the new Barnaboo, their orange eyes gleaming with joy. "Are you lost?"

"Yeah. I was supposed to be in Heaven and yet, I'm here." The new Barnaboo replied, confused. "I was a good person but had my few mishaps. I was supposed to be-"

"Judged? No, no, no! You got it all wrong, darling Barnaboo. This is a judgement free zone, where you can relax eternally and party with me!" Barnaby explained, hooting joyfully and flapping his wings. "And you got in for free, little one!"

"Um, you're not God? Then who are you? Wait, I have seen you before. Halloween 2006. My daughter babbled about you a lot and drew you many times." The new Barnaboo gave Barnaby the side eye. "I think she has a plush of you somewhere."

They start talking to the new guy and learned his name was Dan. Just as Barnaby was about to ask the new Barnaboo out on a date, Dan sighed sadly, "I miss my wife and four kids. Why did I smoke cigarettes and eat junk food?"

That stopped Barnaby in their tracks. They looked down at Dan. "Sorry?" They whispered. Their orange eyes glowed almost sympathetically.

Dan gazed up, his blue eyes a stark contrast to the orange blobs. "I'm spoken for. I just wish that I took better care of myself in life. Ali Mayser was right about cigarettes."

"Who is this 'Ali Mayser'?" Barnaby asked, their eyes glowing faintly.

"She is my best girl. Brown hair, hazel eyes and a trier. She was fighting insomnia until she was thirteen." Dan responded. That caused Barnaby's feathers to stand on end. *He can't be talking about my darling little Octavia!* He hoped. "She said something about an owl monster that tried to kill her multiple times. She ended up in the hospital for eating a poisoned candy apple-!" That was enough for Barnaby to know that this Barnaboo was the Barnaboo who gave their daughter a new body… albeit a featherless one.

“Wow. A monster under her bed at thirteen?” Barnaby asked, masking their true thoughts well. As a party host, it was their duty to keep guests happy. “Sounds like they’re autistic to me.”

“Yes, Ali May is indeed autistic. Even if I don’t always see eye to eye with her somewhat childish interests, if it makes her happy, then who am I to judge?” Dan replied.

Barnaby nods, knowing that this Barnaboo was spoken for. They had told Dan the rules, which he obliged to happily. The giant Stygian ghost owl can easily pick a party animal out of a crowd, and they knew that Dan was a party animal in life. *I wonder if Octavia had picked up that trait from me or Dan?* They mused to themself as Dan wandered into the crowd. They knew that it was the father of his daughter’s vessel. They quickly shone the Gem of Reality that was swinging on a double Albert chain, admiring it. Then they reached into a pocket and stopped to stare at a photo.

It was the only undamaged photo of Octavia they had from their alive days. The sepia photo showed two long eared owls embracing for a family photo. They see their first husband and touched the photo gingerly. *That experiment has changed everything.* They reflected, staring at their family. “You had a kid too?” They hear Dan ask. Barnaby nods, his ear feathers laid back.

“Octavia. Octavia Wifflemaker. Lost her around a century ago. I think I found her soul in a different vessel.” Barnaby was being vague and a little bit devious. Their orange teeth flashed into a deadly grin. “I will be bringing her home very soon.”

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It was now prom night, which landed on my eighteenth birthday. I was wearing a backless red dress. I gaze in the mirror as my big sister started making my hair fancy. I looked pretty… but I didn’t recognize myself. I felt detached from myself. I try to forget the dysphoria I felt as I got my makeup on. My big sister tried to do a cat-eye, but Mom stopped her. “Don’t you dare make my little Puddie into a slut.” She scolded. That stung worse than anything my mom has said before. My smile vanished, replaced with a melancholic blank stare. My mom was dealing with a tumor on her pituitary, making her harsh and frankly quite rude.

Mom then looked at me and scolded, “Smile, Puddie! This is your prom night.” Too late, my mood was soured as I slipped into my boyfriend’s truck. I sigh, shaking my head. *Why does she have to shame me for liking what I like? Why does she feel the need to call me a slut at any opportunity. “You can’t wear a crop top because it’s slutty! No, you can’t wear your makeup like that because you’ll be seen as a slut!”* I thought bitterly.

I spent my prom night dancing. Good thing I bought a ticket to post prom. As soon as I got home, I slip into my street clothes and storm off to school. Finals are upon me, and yet, I was exempt from all of them. So I had literally nothing to worry about. I used the money I won from the spelling bee in freshman year to pay for it. I was on the bus to a night of fun by the time eleven o clock rolled around.

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Barnaby was staring at a globe, their gold eyes gleaming with a new spark of insanity that has never been seen in his eyes before. They lifted the globe and spoke absently, “My, oh, my. So many mortals on that planet. I’m going to have to pick annually. Those darling souls don’t even realize that the gem is fueled by party energy and love!” He started laughing, a soft, hooting wicked laugh.

“Soon, I will be strong enough to be more than just a ghost owl. Soon, I will be a ghostly god that picks mortals to toy with! *Hoo hoo hoo hahahahaha!* ” He cackled, then he preened his black feathers. “However, that won’t feel like anything until I get Octavia fully awakened and out of that pesky mortal body that clings to her like a leech!”

He tapped on a specific part of the globe, where Connecticut is. *Soon, little Via. Soon the world will be in our talons, my precious daughter. I am willing and happy to give you the universe!* He drew his beak back into a devious, poisonous grin. Then he turned and started tinkering on an invention of his. *This will be my last resort to drag her out of that pesky mortal body if she refuses to cooperate. Those silly mortals wouldn’t know what hit them!* He bursts out laughing as he began to sing softly.

*“Grim grinning ghosts may come out to socialize…*

*But soon, my little Via will come to realize*

*That death is not a permanent goodbye,*

*That pesky Alison Black will soon to die!*

*All I need to do is coax her out of that mortal shell*

*Anyone who interferes will be paying with a fun little hell!*

*Known as my little afterlife hootenanny*

*Octavia, come home to Daddy*

*Tonight!*

*Tonight, she will experience fun*

*Beyond her wildest dreams, but if she runs!*

*She will be pulled into the jamboree of my little plot*

*And Octavia will blossom as a ghost owl while her mortal body rots!”*

Then he started hooting and chuckling like a villain, and the other Barnaboos laughed as well, feeling the infectious and delightfully wicked plot of the host of the afterlife party. Then he threw his head back cartoonishly and cackled maniacally. “Daddy’s coming to bring you home, little Octavia!” He cackled joyously.

# Chapter 5: Barnaby's Disappointed

I had no idea of what Barnaby was planning for me in the future. It was graduation day… and the first day of summer. Underneath my red cap and gown was a simple blue dress. It was supposed to be my happiest day ever. After I was made an alumni, I realized that I graduated cum laude and the only one who picked the medical field in a small high school of around 600 kids total. I personally wanted to go into acting but my mother discouraged me heavily by telling me that it was based on luck.

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I did not realize that Barnaby was still watching from a distance. Their chest feathers puff up in joy as they watch their "daughter" graduate with highest honors. *Just like her original dad! Smart as a whip when it comes to science! Too bad magic doesn't exist in her universe, she would have been the greatest magic scientist the world has ever known!* Barnaby thought in joy as they watched their little bird graduate cum laude in the health sciences.

**********

At my graduation party, I was grinning maniacally from the fact that I had worked hard and earned something. I felt really good that I got center stage for once instead of my little sister (She is very autistic. They do come to all of my performances but they generally have their attention on my little sister, who is nonverbal). I turn to brag about my hard work to my father… only to get the cruel reminder that he wasn't there. My grin faded. I try not to cry as I was reminded that I lost my dad in February. I knew I was going to be leaving home for college next September.

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Meanwhile Barnaby was harvesting party energy and adoration from his Barnaboos. He uses music to take some of the party energy. They took a deep, shuddering breath, their pink waistcoat filling as they breathed. They exhaled with soft, maniacal hoots. As they made rounds around the party, they check to make sure everyone is in a high mood. They checked to make sure everyone was doing well. Of course his parties are all the same. Dan picked up on this quite early, finally asking, "Barnaby? Are you autistic by any chance?"

Barnaby paused, turning their head 190 degrees to look at Dan. "Yes. I'm autistic. How come?"

Dan remarked, "I think you might get along with my daughter, Ali May. She loves keeping things mostly predictable. She sometimes talks to herself and meows. But she doesn't do it in public."

"And why is that? Hoo hoo hoo?" Barnaby questioned, having a feeling something was amiss. "Do you not know that stimming is natural? That for some it regulates emotions?"

“Well… where I am from, Barnaby, being autistic was not a good thing. In fact, due to incorrect science, my Alimazer has to keep her autism quiet in public. Meaning she has great difficulty stimming in public. And it doesn’t help that hate groups exist.”

Neither of them realize that seven years later, Barnaby would be considered an accurate autism representation and super popular in a certain fandom with a blue goat (I can’t tell what color Billie is supposed to be either light blue, purple, or a very delicate shade of lilac). They also didn’t realize that Barnaby would take the Internet by storm with their charisma, their fun personality, and their token fee.

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I was moving into my dorm, unaware of the troubles I was going to have. I didn’t realize I would start having an interest in horror. I reread my Sonic fanfiction and realized that I was leaning hard into psychological horror. I don’t realize that I have written the very rough drafts of *Sonicphobia: The Director’s Cut* .

I soon became friends with someone who I really shouldn’t have. I befriended the class snitch out of pity. I didn’t realize the horrors of what she would do to me. At that point I start struggling with my identity. I start figuring out that I was definitely not straight. I was unsure of how to tell my mom that I think I am pan, and it weighed heavily on my conscience.

The class snitch had taught me something really bad that I regretted… and I was stupid enough to parrot it in a text. That earned me a trip to the hospital. I thought about joining my father out of pure shame over what I did. The class snitch taught me to trust nobody. The class snitch also taught me to never let anyone call themselves a close friend of mine again.

**********

Barnaby heard about what I did and the aftermath of what had transpired. Everyone in the afterlife groaned in disappointment at the news, probably thinking that I should have known better. “I thought I taught my little owlet much better manners than that!” Barnaby grumbled, hiding his face in his wing in embarrassment. To say Barnaby was livid would be an understatement in his 100 years of being dead.

“Seriously!? Out of all of the things to suspend my kid for, it has to be for the stupidest thing possible!?” Dan exploded, “If she would get suspended, I thought it would be because she fought back or picked a fight with someone!” I have a disposition for lashing out and doing really stupid shit when I’m mad.

“Dan.” Barnaby warned, his fruity voice unusually solemn and low to keep the peace.

“That Beverly woman is a manipulative, good for nothing-!” Dan ranted, floating around and waving his orange nubs in the air as if he was ready to start some MMAW: murder mitten ass whippin’. His blue eyes were blazing with fury at what happened at the college I lived at. That orange Barnaboo looked ready to bite someone due to frothing at the mouth from the fury of what the hell happened.

“DAN.” The whole party went silent. Nobody has heard Barnaby raise his voice in a hundred years. At least, not in a watch-your-step-or-so-help-you kind of way.

“Sorry Barnaby. It was just stupid. You saw my brother Peter and my own kids laughing at how stupid this suspension is!” Dan was bristling. Barnaby gazed into his Gem, tsking at the crack in it. He can clearly see how much I was suffering. He saw my hair, tangled and knotted from lack of care. Barnaby saw the bags under my eyes from the nightmares of seeing the class snitch again. “That was my Alimazer! Ali May would never-”

Barnaby started squeezing Dan tight, probably in an attempt to pacify him. “Okay, Barnaby! I get it! I’m just disappointed in Ali May!” Dan protested. Barnaby let go of him, ruffling him.

“Dan, we can only watch from here.” Barnaby excused himself with a cheeky wink. Once he was somewhere to scheme, he schemed… big time. This time it would be a powerful potion. He started mixing the ingredients in a cauldron, making it bubble. His gem allowed him to warp it to his own design. He sang softly as he made it, talking about his plot.

*Tick tock, little Via*

*Your father’s getting impatient!*

*I know of your little wrong doing!*

*I blame your little boyfriend!*

*This, right here! Will enhance your ace*

*And the pan?*

**cackling hoot* You’re romantically drawn to them!*

*This is playing in my grand design!*

*Soon, little Via, you will be home and under myyyyyyyyyyyyyyyyy*

*CARE!*

He cackled insanely as the colors of the asexual flag come billowing out of the potion to make the asexual flag. Then the pansexual colors billowed out, forming a heart shape on the asexual flag. Barnaby bottled the potion and heads to my home. It was directly before COVID hit.

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